

Great Lakes Bulletin

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SERVING "THE QUARTERDECK OF THE NAVY" FOR 103 YEARS

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CDC Explains Benefits of COVID-19 Vaccine

Story by Centers for Disease Control



The nation and the Department of Defense are beginning to administer vaccines for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. These vaccines, which are currently voluntary, are a proven effective measure to better protect our Navy Reserve and our nation from this insidious threat. While the vaccine isn't mandatory for service members at this time, every Navy Sailor is encouraged to consider getting the vaccine. Here are the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlighted benefits and information about the vaccine: We understand that some people may be concerned about getting vaccinated now that COVID-19 vaccines are available in the United States. While more COVID-19 vaccines are being developed as quickly as possible, routine processes and procedures remain in place to ensure the safety of any vaccine that is authorized or approved for use. Safety is a top priority, and there are

many reasons to get vaccinated. Below is a summary of the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination based on what we currently know. CDC will continue to update this page as more data become available.

- COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19
- All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19. Learn more about the different COVID-19 vaccines.
- All COVID-19 vaccines that are in development are being carefully evaluated in clinical trials and will be authorized or approved only if they make it substantially less likely you'll get COVID-19. Learn more about how federal partners are ensuring COVID-19 vaccines work.
- Based on what we know about 1





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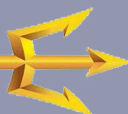
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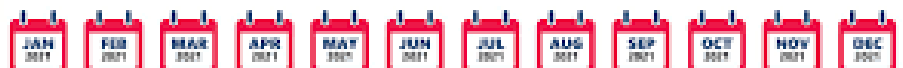
vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.

- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on severity of illness from COVID-19, as well as its ability to keep people from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccination is a safer way to help build protection
- COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you.
- Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). Watch a video on what an EUA is.
- Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts don't know for sure how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.
- Both natural immunity and immunity produced by a vaccine are important parts of COVID-19 disease that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.
- COVID-19 vaccination will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic
- Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.
- Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. As experts learn more about how COVID-19 vaccination may help reduce spread of the disease in communities, CDC will continue to update the recommendations to protect communities using the latest science.

Collection begins for 2020 Deferred Social Security (OASDI)* tax

APPLIES TO MOST MILITARY MEMBERS AND CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

2021 COLLECTION TIMEFRAME



* Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance

NEX Great Lakes Buoys A-School Students Placed on ROM After Holiday Break

Story by Naval Exchange Services Command

When students arrived back at Naval Station Great Lakes Illinois, Training Support Center after holiday break, they were required to be on restriction of movement (ROM) for 14 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To help support those students, NEX Great Lakes stepped up and modified the NEX Quarantine Program to make their ROM a bit more comfortable.

“We were contacted by base leadership to lend our support to the 4,500 A-School students who were required to ROM after the holiday break,” said Christopher Ponchak, General Manager, NEX Great Lakes. “By utilizing our NEX Quarantine Program, we were able to offer a variety of food, beverages and other basic items since students couldn’t leave their rooms.”

To let the students know about the NEX Quarantine Program, the NEX staff provided them with a QR code before and after the holiday break. The QR code gave the students electronic access to the NEX merchandise order sheet. Once students gained access to the order sheet, they selected the items they wanted to purchase and sent it to the NEX. Once received, the NEX fulfilled the order, contacted the student to complete the transaction and then delivered the merchandise to the barracks quarterdeck for free, typically within 24 hours. The NEX offered the program to students from Dec. 28, 2020 – Jan. 8, 2021.

“During the peak, it was all hands on deck at the NEX where we had over 50 associates dedicated to this program, using 11 cash registers to ring up the sales just to keep up with the demand,” said Ponchak. “My team did an extraordinary job pulling and delivering over 46,000 items to over 10 different barracks during that two-week period. Being able to support these young men and women during a time when everyone is a little down due to COVID-19 really reenergized me and my team and shows what the NEX is really all about which is supporting our military members however and whenever we can.”

The students were thankful for the program as well.

“I appreciate everything you guys are doing for us. Thank you so much,” said Gunner’s Mate 2nd Class Wendy Correia. Interior Communications Electricians Apprentice Dusty Sweeney, wrote, “Thank you all for doing this! We all appreciate this system very much.”

The NEX Downrange Program was originally created overseas to support troops who are forward-deployed without access to a NEX. But due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the program has transformed into a quarantine support program to support service members who have either been placed on ROM by their commands or aboard a ship in port overseas and unable to disembark.

Navy Modernizes Tuition Assistance Debt Payments

Story by Cheryl Dengler, Naval Education and Training Professional Development Center

The new program provides service members with the option to pay their debt on a mobile device or computer using a debit card, electronic funds transfer (EFT) or via a PayPal account. Credit cards will not be accepted through this program, and PayPal can only be used if linked to a debit card or bank account.

Until now, service members were required to repay TA debt using a cashier’s check, money order or a payroll transaction—a process that took anywhere from a week to 45 days, according to Tim Driggers, Voluntary Education Business Operations division head.

“This is the first time since the beginning of the tuition assistance program in the mid-nineties that we’ve done

electronic debt payments,” said Driggers. “The service members can pay with their bank account using a smartphone as opposed to putting a check in the mail. Since the pilot program began, we’ve seen a reduction in checks by about 60% by doing e-billing on a weekly basis.”

The new capability not only benefits the accounting system, but the service member as well.

“We saw a debt get paid within two hours of service member notification,” said Driggers. “This allows the service member to be in good standing again, so that the TA is available for use immediately.”

The process is streamlined and simple to use for the service members, according to Fred Morales, the TA 3

Collections branch head.

“Once an indebtedness occurs due to a collectible grade, and provided the course has been invoiced by an academic institution, the service member will receive an email with instructions directing them to Pay.gov where they can make the payment electronically,” said Morales. “It’s very easy to use.”

In most cases, debt transactions will be posted to the member’s WebTA account by TA Accounting the next business day after the service member pays their TA debt using Pay.gov.

If a debt payment is not made within 45 days, a file will be sent to Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) to cancel the e-bill, and the debt amount will be taken from

the service member through payroll deduction.

For more information regarding the repayment of TA debts, please call: 1-877-838-1659, option 4.

As part of the MyNavy HR Force Development team, Naval Education and Training Professional Development Center (NETPDC) provides products and services that enable and enhance education, training, career development and personnel advancement throughout the Navy. Primary elements of the command include the Voluntary Education Department, the Navy Advancement Center and the Resources Management Department.

Additional information about NETPDC can be found at <https://www.netc.navy.mil/NETPDC>

Overseas Orders Must Test Negative for COVID-19 Prior to Flying

Story by Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

All Sailors and family members executing outside the continental United States (OCONUS) travel orders are required to have a negative Coronavirus test prior to travel, according to NAVADMIN 03/21 released Jan. 7, 2021.

Many countries are now requiring negative test results for service members before arrival. Testing is the responsibility of the service member, and they must determine their individual requirements based upon their destination location by referring to the Foreign Clearance Guide (FCG) and their airline’s policy.

OCONUS travelers must have a negative viral COVID-19 test (molecular or antigen) within 72 hours of embarkation. An antigen test may be used for testing prior to travel when a molecular test (such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or Abbott ID NOW) is not available. However, a molecular test is the preferred test prior to travel.

If the destination location requires a specific test, test timing, or test result format, travelers must follow the stricter requirement.

Once tested, service members must have their test results in hand with time left before expiration prior to arrival at the next destination.

Sailors or family members who test positive for COVID-19 while executing OCONUS orders must stop and execute restriction of movement (ROM) procedures. If a test is positive, Sailors should contact the MyNavy Career Center (MNCC), where an agent will take appropriate action to notify the Sailor’s detailer and Navy Passenger Transportation Office (NAVPTO). Sailors should communicate with their detailer and the NAVPTO to discuss orders modifications and future travel arrangements, if needed.

Travelers with valid proof of COVID-19 vaccination are currently not exempt from the testing requirement. Vaccinated travelers should only rely on molecular-based tests because they may be at higher risk of a false positive with an antigen test.

Service members and their families can get free testing at a military treatment facility (MTF), but tests must be scheduled prior to arrival and OCONUS orders are required. Test results will be delivered within 24 hours after testing. Preferred Military Treatment Facility Locations/Phone Contact/Testing Hours Available

- Camp Pendleton, CA, (760) 685-3537, 24/7 testing available
- Bremerton, WA, (360) 340-5335, testing 9 a.m. – 10 p.m.
- Madigan Army Hospital. Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, (253) 968-4443, testing 6 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Portsmouth, VA, (757) 953-6200, 24/7 testing available
- Jacksonville, FL, (994) 250-6188, 24/7 testing available
- Camp Lejeune, NC, (910) 450-2956, 24/7 testing available
- Fort Belvoir, VA, COVID Clinic (571) 231-0532, testing 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Fort Belvoir, VA CDO (571) 585-6066, 24/7 testing available
- Walter Reed, Central Screening, (571) 335-9985, testing 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Walter Reed, CDO, (301) 547-1161, 24/7 testing available
- For more information see NAVADMIN 03/21, or contact the MNCC at 1-833-330-6622, email - askmncc@navy.mil.

Military Tax Services Available Through Military OneSource

Story by Terri Moon Cronk, DoD News

Tax services for the military — also known as MilTax — is DOD's approved tax-filing and tax-support service — including tax preparation and e-filing software and personalized support to deal with issues such as deployments, combat and training pay, housing and rentals, multistate filings, and living overseas.

"They can connect with a [tax] consultant during the tax season, and even past [it], through October, but in addition to having that live support walking through the filing process and asking questions that are specific to the military around taxes, they're able to access the MilTax software," said Kelly Smith, program analyst with the DOD's Military Community and Family Policy. MilTax consultants are available virtually.

An advantage to the MilTax software, Smith noted, is it's designed and tailored for the military community.

E-filing allows service members to file their federal returns along with up to three state returns at no cost.

That's huge in the military community, because our families are [going through permanent changes of station] and moving multiple times," she noted.

Overall, the MilTax services are designed to be stress-free, Smith said. "[People] can rest assured that they are working with tax professionals who know and are familiar with military tax situations," she said, adding that many MilTax consultants return to offer their services every year in high numbers, which provides continuity and knowledge of the armed forces' needs.

At this point, this year's tax deadline for filing 2020 taxes is April 15, although last year it was extended to July 15 because of COVID-19. If there is an extension this year, Smith said MilTax is prepared for it. "Our staff and our consultants are positioned to fill in the gaps where there may be additional need for that support online and over the phone," she said.

MilTax availability runs until mid-October for service members who need extensions.

"That's simply because we know that the tax season usually ends in April, but for our military community, sometimes people are overseas or they are in a combat zone, and, so, they're able to file those extensions, and [we are] there to help them file their taxes at a later time," Smith said.

Smith said she is not tracking any significant changes in tax law for the 2020 filing year that would affect service members and their families. "But the 2020 Social Security tax deferral is a big thing at this time," she noted. "We are referring and connecting filers with [the Defense Finance Accounting Service] and with the IRS regarding questions and concerns they have outside of the tax deferral."

Also, MilTax can guide its military filers who have questions surrounding the economic stimulus package from 2020.

"I want to ensure that our service members and families know they can turn to Military OneSource and the tax service as a trusted source, and [MilTax services] understand taxes as it relates to the military community," Smith said.

Fleet and Family Support Center is now open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., for most services.

The USO and MWR are either closed or providing limited services until further notice. For any questions regarding upcoming events, classes, or other concerns, please contact the appropriate organization.

Thank you!



Visit www.navywmwrgreatlakes.com
for more information



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Call Military One Source at 800-342-9647, or visit: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/all-the-ways/>.

For Great Lakes Sailors, VITA Tax Assistance will be on base starting February 10, 2021. They will be located in Building 2B, Room 148, Monday through Friday from 10

a.m. to 5 p.m. with no appointment required. This program is open to active duty, retired military, dependents of active or retired, and reservists on active duty for more than 30 days. Bring your primary ID, military or dependent ID, and any applicable tax forms.

Human Trafficking

Story by Kathi Hesselgrave, Fleet and Family Support Center Great Lakes

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Because the U.S. is a top destination for trafficked persons and because trafficking is happening in most communities, both rich and poor, all citizens and military families in particular should be knowledgeable about the various forms of human slavery happening today both in our geographic area and across the world.

What is it? Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion to control another for the purpose of engaging in any kind of commercial sex or labor services. Although we commonly think of slavery as having been abolished in the world, it thrives today in the U.S. and abroad. Traffickers use violence, threats, deception, debt bondage and manipulation to trick or trap victims in horrific situations every day. While some victims are locked behind doors and held against their will, others are not free to leave because of mental and psychological manipulation or threats of harm. Often foreign documents are taken and they are threatened with possible arrest should they attempt to leave. Victims share an important experience: the loss of freedom.

How and where? Human Trafficking is everywhere! In the U.S. sex trafficking most often occurs via on-line escort services, residential brothels, erotic massage parlors or spas, strip clubs or street prostitution. Even in communities near Great Lakes, research indicates that there are multitudes of these types of ‘businesses’ that serve as fronts for the sale of persons. Since most purchases are made on-line it remains an “out-of-sight” issue. Labor trafficking situations happen through domestic servitude, sales crews, farms, restaurants, fishing industries, carnivals and other labor situations, including some factories.

Why? It’s all about the money! The driving force behind human slavery is high profits and low risk of being caught. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are 20.9 million victims of human trafficking globally, including 5.5 million children. Worldwide human slavery is a \$150 billion per year industry and growing fast. Anyone could be a trafficker including the elderly couple next door, a parent or “boyfriend.” However, gangs and organized

crime are often involved in trafficking persons due to the lucrative profits.

Who is at risk? Although anyone could become a victim of human trafficking, the most at risk are children and adolescents, runaways and homeless youth, those who have histories of being abused or neglected, the disabled – either physical or mental – and LGBT youth. Homeless youth are at highest risk, being approached by a trafficker within 48 hours of leaving shelter. Any minor who is engaged in a sex-related business is considered trafficked if another person profits. Those at highest risk for being labor trafficked are immigrants due to language barriers and financial needs, as they can easily fall prey to promises of a better life.

How do I recognize a trafficked person? Red flags: not free to come and go; has a pimp or manager; is unpaid/underpaid; excessive or unusual work hours; unusual restrictions at work; owes a large debt to another; and high security at work or where they live. Others might be: fearful, especially with the mention of law enforcement; depressed; avoidant of eye contact; poor health; signs of physical or sexual abuse, restraint, confinement; few personal possessions; is not in control of his/her own money; no ID or passport; a third party desires to be present and speaks for the other.

What are ways to help? If you recognize signs and/or the person is reluctant to talk about their situation, they may be a victim of human trafficking. Anyone can call in a tip to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. If enough information can be provided, appropriate law enforcement is aware of how to investigate without putting the victim in greater jeopardy. Attempting to intervene yourself could put you or the victim in greater jeopardy. Ending modern day slavery is important and anything that you do matters to victims who are caught in this terrible place of suffering. Let’s do something!

If you have questions, please contact Kathi Hesselgrave, MSW, LCSW, Fleet and Family Support Center at 847/688-3603 x124.